

# '07 Oilers: keeping Whyte safe



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Commentary

When the *Edmonton Journal* printed a cover story earlier this month that dealt with the facts about the riots and vandalism on Whyte Avenue that occurred during last year's Oilers playoff run, the hard-hitting investigational report provided a pertinent message to the citizens of this city. Featuring pictures of intelligent Oiler aficionados jumping into piles of burning pallets, the article sent a strict message to the Edmonton Oilers, the underlying instigators of last year's crimes: your hockey team's habit of winning emotional games and taking fans on a glorious, spellbinding Cup run must be stopped.

Thankfully, this year, that won't be an issue, for the Oilers have heeded the warnings demonstrated by these zealots, and done their best to ensure that Whyte will be much more secure and peaceful this coming May and June.

Simply put, the team's previous predilection towards winning was putting them on a crash course with the post-season—a happier time when shooting fireworks into large crowds meant more than just third-degree burns. It meant a love of your team that only martial law could contain.

Security on Whyte is a serious concern for all University students, and to say that the Oilers' fortunes can't make a difference is incredibly unrealistic. Just gaze at the mind-numbing statistics the *Journal* provided. After the team vanquished their adversaries, 747 enthusiasts were arrested for celebrating the red-hot Oilers power play by setting phone booths ablaze. Comparatively,



FILE PHOTO: ERIC KOZAKIEWICZ

**FLAMES CONSUME** Phone booths, flags and Oiler pride. At least the Oil have decided to kybosh celebrations like this on Whyte this Spring with their play.

a mere 59 devotees were tossed in the pattywagon after games that were lost—serial window-smashing being a poor way to comiserate serial goaltender interference.

However, upon witnessing the blind celebratory stupidity they were causing, the Oilers made a valiant pledge to down the ante in the future to ensure that available tear gas stocks or fire extinguishers remained constant.

Working hard to deliver real devotees a spring where they could sit idly in their homes, cheering on their team in a rousing game of Scattergories, the entire Oilers organization gave 110 per cent efforts this season. They made baffling trades, looked over-matched against Conference rivals and got injured when it mattered the most. Just a week ago, Steve Staios noted in an interview that he'd "never seen [the Oilers] this beaten up as a team." He was alluding, of course, to the neighbourhood watch patrols that the team volunteered for starting in September. Edmontonians should be proud that their team's working hard to take the night back from rampaging Edmontonians.

But the clincher was when Kevin Lowe, the Barney Fife of Copper and Blue law enforcement, shipped away the two masterminds of last year's riots: Ryan Smyth and Chris Pronger. At the point of Smyth's trade, it was obvious that the organization was taking the looming threat of making the playoffs very seriously. But they were willing to put aside their petty ambitions of greatness in order to overcome the obstacles that prevented them from losing—and they succeeded, to the collective relief of phone-booth manufacturers everywhere. All fans, the dedicated or the soon-to-be-naturally-selected, will be able to safely hang off of power lines at the horse races this May, undisturbed by playoff action or the nightstick of a riot cop.

It could be a while before this team gives their followers a reason to high-five or stab each other again. Despite their efforts this year, we can rest assured that if the Oilers give fans a smidgen of excitement anytime in the near future, a small group of fanatics will go to great lengths to ruin those good times for everyone else.

## Too much chirping, not enough cricket

Canadian sports networks must have a broken wicket to ignore the World Cup



ROSS  
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Sports  
Commentary

Thanks to TSN, Sportsnet and the Score, Canadians have gradually been exposed to sports beyond the four major professional leagues in North America. Over the years, soccer, NASCAR, paintball, the Viking challenge and poker have all earned a place in our living rooms and our hearts, as TV has taught us the rules, strategies and major players. However, while all of these endeavors have somehow managed to find a time slot, each of the all-sports stations has some how managed to neglect finding time to cover an event perfectly suited for Canadians' sedentary lifestyles: the Cricket World Cup. From last week until 28 April, the World Cup could be providing hours of entertainment, excitement and another opportunity to cheer on a Canadian squad in international competition.

It's not like the Cricket World Cup is unfamiliar to Canadians; we've been beating the Americans at it since before the War of 1812. And while we might not follow it with the passion we give

to hockey, it still should be considered a major event in Canada because of its following by the large and diverse immigrant population. Add the fact that Canada has actually qualified for the last two World Cups, and surely our national cricket side deserves more air time than our dismal soccer squad.

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Given that, as a nation, we adore a sport as baffling as curling and are well acquainted with baseball—cricket's Budweiser-swilling nephew—one of the three networks should've picked up the Canadian games, at least. The World Cup of Soccer proved this past summer that the large immigrant population in Canada can be a driving force for sports on television, and cricket is a favourite in India, Pakistan, the West Indies, Australia, England and New Zealand. Instead, the millions of potential fans across the country will

have to scan stats pages or YouTube to get the lowdown of how our nation's valiant bowlers gracefully sent the bails flying, or if anyone of our boys hit for a century.

The only logical reason that one of the sports networks couldn't find a hole in their schedule for cricket is that our beloved bowlers, batsmen and wicket keeper are in tough this time. Lumped into a pool with England, New Zealand and Kenya, our national side could be down by dozens of runs with only six overs by teatime during each match. This wouldn't make for the best day's viewing, but there isn't a true sports fan that can't recall our thrilling (and only) Cricket World Cup victory over Bangladesh or the record low score of 36 we posted against Sri Lanka in 2003. Those are important moments in Canadian sporting history, and we should have the chance if our side can better these.

Unfortunately, this year Canadians hoping to watch some of the Cricket World Cup will have to shell out for an expensive satellite package or settle into an obliging local bar. It's sad that like the CIS, NLL and other second tier sports, the CWC will get almost no attention and little air time from TSN, Sportsnet and the Score—but I guess what they consider sports doesn't extend much beyond car racing, paintball, cards and shuffleboard on ice.

# THEATRE SPORTS

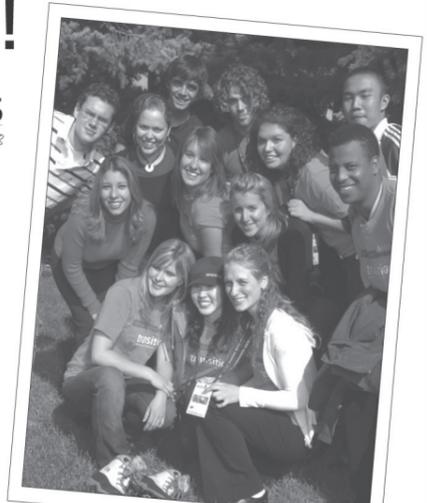
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